1868

ADDRESS OF THE KINGSTON SABBATH REFORMATION SOCIETY

To Ministers of the Gospel, Office-bearers of Churches, and Christians of all Denominations, within the Dominion of Canada.

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE LORD:

Constrained by the love of Christ, our common Lord, we the Committee of the Kingston Sabbath Reformation Society, now proceed to address you on a subject of vital importance to the interests of His cause and Kingdom.

All true Christians love and revere the Lord's day, because it is the Lord's, and when duly observed, according to His Commandment, redounds greatly to the honour of His Divine Majesty, who is "Lord of the Sabbath," and to the prosperity, peace, and happiness of His loyal subjects:—On the other hand, when violated and set at naught by those called by His name, it greatly detracts from His declarative glory, tends to bring His supreme authority into contempt, and drags down thousands from the paths of righteousnes and honour to those of vice, ignominy and ruin.

The important duty devolves upon us at this time to submit to you for your deliberate and prayerful consideration, the perilous and alarming state of things which exists as to the desecration of the Lord's Day on the railways and canals of Ontario, and Quebec, especially on the Grand Trunk Railway, and on the St. Lawrence and other canals of the Dominion.

We had learned some time ago that by a vote of the House of Commons, 13th May, 1868, on motion of Hon. Mr Abbott, "an Address was voted to His Excellency the Governor General, praying that he will be pleased to order the series of canals known as the Carillon and Grenville Canals, to be closed for traffic on Sundays," and though not recorded in the "Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons," it has since been told us that after the discussion of the Address the order was made applicable to all the canals of the country. Believing this to be true, we hail with pleasure and thankfulness to Almighty God, and grateful feeling towards the House of Commons, the recognition by them of the rights of the employees and labourers on the canals to a whole Sabbath, each individual for himself, as given to all by the Supreme Ruler of the universe, for their physical, moral, and intellectual well-being; and we hope that no time will be lost by the Executive, in restoring to them the full enjoyment of this right, and that it will never again be encroached upon. The House of Commons having taken this important step in the line of duty, as regards the closing of the canals on the Lord's Day, we trust they will not stop till they have rendered the same debt of justice to all the public departments under their immediate control, and until all who suffer under similar grievances, *e. g.*, the employees and labourers on the Railways, have the same right restored and secured to them by Statute.

Thus we are naturally led to solicit your attention to the state of things on Sabbath Days, as it presented itself on the Grand Trunk Railway last winter, referring you to pages 5, 6, 8-10 of our Eighteenth Report for 1867, (a copy of which is herewith sent), for information, confining ourselves in this Address to a few remarks as to the present state of things on that Railway on the Lord's Day.

We have ascertained from a reliable source that not only do express trains leave Montreal and Toronto on the evening of every Saturday, at 7:30, or thereabout (as during last winter), and prosecute their journey to their respective termini, without stopping during Sabbath hours at Belleville, and Brockville, respectively, as previously, to the great annoyance of the inhabitants all along their course, disturbing the peace of families, and grievously interfering with the religious duties of Churches, Sabbath Schools, &c., but that freight trains also run upon the Lord's reserved time; and that on each of the last three Sabbaths, from 3 to 5 such trains passed through the neighbouring Depot, requiring the attendance of employees and labourers. We have also obtained confirmation of the statements in the annual report, regarding the excessive work on the Grand Trunk Railway, during the whole of the past winter, engrossing almost all the week and Sabbath days of all hands.

These and such like must be admitted to be unnecessary and unjustifiable aggressions on the Lord's time, demanding the zealous and persevering efforts of all good men to have them arrested by legal enactment, and that prompt and decided measures should be adopted, as soon as practicable, for this end. Early attention to these duties is the more needful and pressing, because it is to be feared that still greater encroachments will be made on the Lord's time by workmen employed in constructing the Intercolonial Railroad, and other projected railroads, if legal barriers do not prevent.

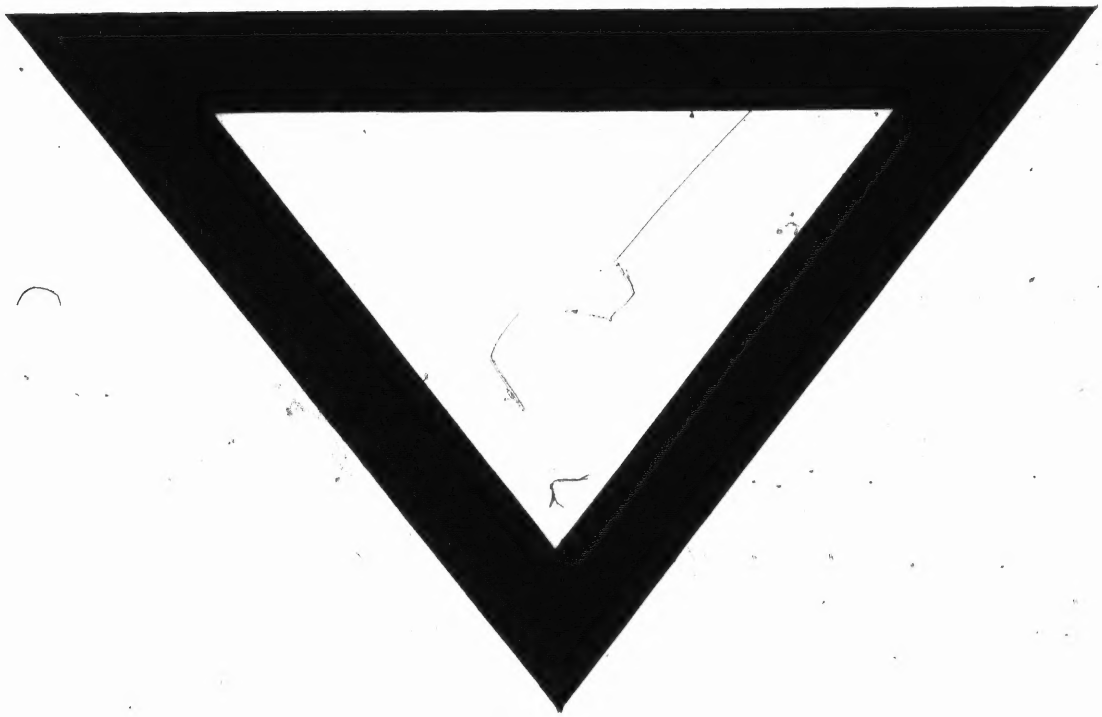
There are some other points in relation to the profanation of the Lord's Day to which we desire respectfully to direct your attention. There is an exceptional clause in the Act, 8 Victoria, Cap. XLV., 29th March, 1845, sanctioning the conveyance of Her Majesty's mail or travellers by land or water, on the Lord's Day. This exception, however it may have been apparently or really necessary, when the Act was passed, before Railway trains began to run, in consequence of the mode of travelling then in use, which was extremely tardy and uncertain, can have no just plea offered or sustained in its favour now, when express trains run every lawful day, and therefore should not be allowed to run on Sabbath, which legally is a *Dies non*. This clause should be rescinded, and also the clause licensing the sale of drugs and medicines except to be used of necessity *for bona fide* medical purposes.

Many other matters we should wish to lay before you, but time so precious, especially to you ministers of the gospel, and lay members, at your approaching Synods and Conferences, and in preparing for them, precludes our trespassing longer upon your patience.

We conclude by bespeaking your impartial and prayerful consideration of the premises, and that of all to whom this appeal is addressed, hoping that each church will at its annual meeting pass resolutions on the subject of Sabbath desecration, and recommend to their congregations the formation of Sabbath Defence Societies in each city and town, and in every populous locality; and also the calling of a Convention to consist of clerical and lay delegates from all the provinces, for the thorough investigation and elucidation of this most important branch of Christian ethics, at an early date. Moreover, we beg strongly to recommend the sending in of petitions to the Governor General, Senate, and House of Commons, from all classes and every place, asking for these reforms, during the ensuing session of Parliament; and above all, that earnest persevering prayer be offered up by the friends of the Sabbath in the name of its Lord, that He would be graciously pleased to crown our endeavours with success. "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts," Zech. iv., 6.

In the name and on behalf of the Committe of the Kingston Sabbath Reformation Society.

NEIL MACLEOD, *President.*
JOHN MAIR, M.D., *Secretary.*

Kingston, 29th May, 1868.

N.B.—Secretaries of Synods and other Associations to whom parcels are sent, are respectfully requested to distribute them among their members.